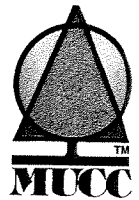


# Michigan United Conservation Clubs

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TO: Members of Local Government and Urban Policy Committee  
Representative

Booher

FROM: Sam Washington, Executive Director

DATE: 03/27/06

RE: Opposition to House Bill 5814

The Michigan United Conservation Clubs is a statewide conservation organization that has represented the views of million of conservationists since 1937. MUCC has 458 affiliated clubs with over 200,000 members and 53,000 individual members all united to ensure conservation of Michigan's natural resources.

Our membership provides the dollars and cents that make up the restricted funds which pay for the management of many of the valuable natural resources the state of Michigan has to offer. Our membership has both a personal and a fiscal interest in where those dollars are being spent. MUCC's members also have an avid interest in ensuring proper and adequate public access to the natural resources of the state.

MUCC stands opposed to HB 5814 for the following reasons:

1. HB 5814 takes the final decision-making authority to purchase lands out of the hands of the DNR and gives it to the local units of government. This section of the bill could have a detrimental affect on the ability of the DNR to both add to the state park system and provide public access to Michigan's valuable natural resources.

Michigan's state legislators must think about their individual Districts, but they are also charged with thinking about the best interests of the state as a whole. Local units of government don't necessarily have such a state-wide vision. By

placing final decision making authority for the purchase of public lands and public access sites in the hands of local units we are not looking out for the best interests of the state; its economy or its natural resources.

The DNR is the agency best able to promote a state-wide vision of Michigan's natural resources. They should have the ability to add to public lands, both acreage and access, if it is in the best interest of the state. MUCC supports a cooperative approach between local units and the DNR in this situation, but does not support veto power for the local units.

2. HB 5814 requires all PILT payments to be considered a "tax". A state unit of government cannot be taxed, so calling for PILT to become a tax effectively says that the government will not have to pay.

MUCC is also concerned about tax reversion. If the government is unable to pay its "tax" will the property revert back to the county or state? And if counties have first dibs to put these properties back on the tax roles, do we face the possibility of losing some of our state's natural treasures to development?

3. HB 5814 requires all PILT payments to come from restricted funds. This requirement says to us that state lands only provide benefits to hunters, anglers and other user groups that pay into the restricted funds, when that is clearly not true (PLEASE SEE ATTACHMENT A). Local units receive many of the benefits from the millions of dollars that public lands bring into the community, including a rise in property value for those lands near and adjacent to public lands.

Our ability to draw people to Michigan lies in our natural resources and public lands, the benefits they provide and our ability to take care of them. Michigan hunters and anglers pay into the restricted funds used to purchase many of the properties that make Michigan a premier place for people to spend their money on outdoor and wildlife related activities. However, we are not the only user group that benefits. Michigan's public lands are accessible and widely used by hikers, bikers, climbers, kayakers, canoers, swimmers and other outdoor enthusiasts whose numbers are continually growing, but who pay no fees to use public lands. Requiring all PILT payments to come from restricted funds also leaves those funds open to the possibility that they will not be able to meet their other obligations in the long term, such as habitat improvements, game management, boating access...

Also, this bill will not work for lands purchased either with bond dollars or with federal funds such as Pittman-Robertson Fund, Wallop-Breaux Fund and Land and Water Conservation Fund. There are no extra dollars available here for PILT payments. MUCC is willing to work to develop an acceptable solution to the PILT problem, but we are opposed to using restricted funds to pay the entire fee.

## ATTACHMENT A

Excerpts from *2001 National Survey of Fishing, Hunting, and Wildlife-Associated Recreation, Michigan*. Revised March 2003. U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service.

### Wildlife watching:

Approximately 2.7 million resident and non-residents watch wildlife in Michigan, of that 2.7 million 884,000 are non-residential and they spent an annual total of approximately 14.0 million days watching wildlife.

A total of \$693 million was spent on wildlife watching in 2001:

- \$189 million was spent on food and lodging
- \$55 million on transportation
- \$37 million on other trip expenses such as equipment rental
- \$296 million on equipment (binoculars, special clothes, etc.)
- \$58 million on auxiliary equipment such as campers, tents, backpacking equipment
- \$56 million other (magazines, membership dues, contributions, plantings, etc.)

Of the 884,000 non-residential people watching wildlife in Michigan 655,000 visited public areas including lakes, streamsides, marsh, wetlands, swamps, woodlands, brush covered areas, open fields and man-made areas. 309,000 Michigan residents visit public areas less than a mile from their homes to observe wildlife.

### Fishing:

Approximately 1.4 million residents and non-residents fishing in Michigan in 2001. Of that 1 million were state residents and 352,000 were non-residential and they spent a total of 19.3 million days fishing in Michigan.

A total of \$839 million was spent on fishing activities in 2001:

- \$238 million on food and lodging
- \$132 million on transportation
- \$149 million on equipment rental, cooking fuel, bait
- \$178 million on fishing equipment (lines, reels, rods, etc.)
- \$85 million on auxiliary equipment such as tents, special clothes, etc.
- \$57 million on other (magazines, membership dues, licenses, permits, stamps)

979,000 anglers spent 12,817,000 days fishing in Michigan's ponds, lakes, reservoirs, rivers or streams. While private access is available for some of

these anglers in Michigan, public access is required for many anglers to access these waterways.

#### Hunting:

Approximately 754,000 residents and non-residents hunted in Michigan in 2001. Of that number 705,000 were residents and 48,000 were non-residents and they spent a total of 9 million days hunting in Michigan.

A total of \$491 million was spent on hunting activities in Michigan in 2001.

- \$104 million on food and lodging
- \$51 million on transportation
- \$9 million on equipment rental
- \$194 million on hunting equipment (guns, ammo, etc.)
- \$70 million on auxiliary equipment (tents, special hunting clothes, etc.)
- \$63 million on other (magazines, membership dues, licenses, permits, etc.)

248,000 hunters spent 3,352,000 days hunting on public lands.

Michigan is 7<sup>th</sup> in the NATION for participants (both resident and non-resident) in wildlife- associated activities within the state- we are only bested by California, Florida, Texas, Pennsylvania, New York and Ohio.